Multiculturalism and the Literary Canon:
American and Romanian Perceptions

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Multiculturalism is the produce of liberal democracy. Citizenship, in this context, does not signify a comprehensive universal identity. People are unique, self-creating and creative individuals, in the tradition of John Stuart Mill and Ralph Waldo Emerson. They are also ''culture bearing'', i.e. they bear the cultures that differ depending on their past and present identifications.

As individual identity is partly constituted by collective dialogues, there is existential value in the expanding of the individuals' cultural horizons. One gains this enriching spiritual worth by varied exposal to different cultural perspectives that increase the possibilities of intellectual growth (Gutman 6-7).

How did multiculturalism happen to the United State of America? It started as an angry social response to a WASP version of ''American exceptionalism''. This 19th century North American shibboleth expressed a civic credo that grounded public life and institutions on natural rights granting all citizens equality in public life (Higham 197). However, ''what was potentially universal was soon understood as the sacred possession of a peculiar people'' (Higham 198). Later on, at the beginning of the twentieth century, due to the growth of the American middle class economic status, it narrowed down to a class and a race. A number of specific phenomena took place. The middle and upper classes started moving to exclusive neighborhoods, going to country clubs and driving automobiles. Factory-dominated districts appeared, alongside with working class-populated slums. There was obvious anger and bewilderment of native white Americans at the hardening of social categories, which eventually led to racism (Higham 199 – 200).

Progressivism (1890 – 1920) revitalized egalitarianism via the Democratic Party, industrial and interracial labor unions, churches, public schools, universities, and multiethnic popular culture industry (Higham 200). Moreover, between 1910 and 1950 a new intellectual class (e.g. John Dewey, Jane Addams, W.E.B. DuBois, and Thorstein Weblen) which modernized the terms of national ideology introducing a more realistic, critical, and historically contextualized understanding of human rights and social processes, revived American universalism. They made American universalism cosmopolitan in a more genuine manner. It was more responsive to the aspirations of ethnic minorities and underprivileged classes. This account of the promise of America offered a ''concrete sense of the common good. This social-democratic perspective took possession of the social sciences and of the literary intelligentsia between the two world wars'' (Higham 200).

By the early 1960s the process of public space desegregation had started. Gradually, there was progress in the process of public schools integration and truthful appreciation of African-American culture. However, one ominous sign of the decade was Martin Luther King, Jr.'s failure (1966, 1967) to turn his civil rights crusade into a

broader class coalition (common front of underprivileged people, white and black). A new style of black leadership, speaking the language of racial power rather than the idea of universal rights, was on. Suburbanization[1] and economic advancement drained from white ethnics the class resentments that the Democratic Party had mobilized. The fear of an increasingly stratified society, from the first part of the 20th century gave way to a consumer oriented spirit of expansiveness and self-indulgence (Higham 201).

There were, however, some groups who were left behind: lower-class blacks, middle class women, and uncared-for-children. In this context an outpouring of rage in black America, in the 1960s, sent shudders of guilt and anxiety through the affluent classes of white America. The result was an educational reform movement. The reformers proposed to make education more accessible and supportive to minorities by infusing the curriculum with recognition of "ethnic diversity". The schools could nourish ethnic pride and assuage fearsome anger.

At first, in the 1970s, the reform movement was known as multiethnic education/multicultural education. In 1988, the American Studies Association took up the cry. For the first time the association chose "Cultures of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Class" as the theme of its annual meeting. Since then American studies programs around the country have increasingly redesigned themselves as multicultural alliances. A cross section of adults was asked in 1990 which ethnic group in America should have more power. Forty-seven percent of the respondents said blacks should mode power; 46 percent said Hispanic Americans; 6 percent said whites (*New York Times*, 8 Jan. 1992). However, there still are ethnic problems in America, mainly due to class/economic gaps.

Within the American academe, the European white male author model had already been thoroughly criticized during the 1960s and 1970s: literary works by women, gays, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and non-Europeans had made their way into college literature courses. However, the question of their permanent status as canonical works still remained to be decided: should they become a required and consistent part of the college curriculum, informed by the literary canon? This question has been hotly debated both by academics and non-academics since the early 1980s. The Modern Language Association sponsored special sessions on the canon during their annual conventions; scholars hotly debated the issue in the *New York Times* and the *London Times*; former Secretary of Education William Bennett made his reactionary views about the canon nationally known; English departments across the country undertook reevaluations of their English curriculum, guided by such key texts as Paul Lauter's *Reconstructing American Literature* (1983), Sacvan Bercovitch's *Reconstructing American Literary History* (1986), and A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff and Jerry W. Ward Jr.'s *Redefining American Literary History* (1990). The contents of new anthologies of literature became an acutely discussed issue, and Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* (1987) and E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy* (1987) remained on best-seller lists.

While the issue of which works belong in the English and American literary canon has not been permanently settled, a spectrum of opinions has gradually emerged. Some conservative scholars insist that the classics of English and American literature

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[1] The process of population movement from within towns and cities to the rural-urban fringe due to the congestion and population density of the cities, pollution caused by industry and high levels of traffic and a general perception of a lower quality of life in inner city areas.

taught since the beginning of the nineteenth century must remain at the core of the canon since they represent the notion of tradition. These critics would exclude non-canonical works on the basis that they are marginal and do not represent the best literary achievement of the culture concerned. On the other end of the spectrum there are radical scholars who would almost completely replace the classics of the canon with non-canonical and documentary works. They argue, for example, that the diary of a female garment worker from the early part of the twentieth century is more pertinent to today's students of English than T. S. Eliot's poetry. The majority of scholars fall somewhere in the middle, however, in that they advocate keeping a modest core of classics in the canon but supplementing it with the best of literature by women and minorities. With the aim of carrying on and refining this debate, critics have written much about inclusion criteria for both American and English works. Scholars like Lillian S. Robinson, Nina Baym, and Anette Kolodny have injected questions of gender and empowerment into the canon debate. There has also been discussion about the political aspects of the canon, with critics such as Patrick Williams and Karen Lawrence focusing on postcolonial aspects of minority literature.

Multiculturalism had emerged as a logical and practical offshoot of the Cultural Studies stem wrought out of the British Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall), French poststructuralist theory (Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, Pierre Bourdieu), and American pluralism.

Leftist types of literary inquiry situated aesthetic phenomena in relation to social foundations and other cultural works. This approach requires, besides textual analysis, investigations into the economic, political, institutional, and historical grounds of cultural production, distribution, and consumption (Leitch 400-401). Leftist critics concurred on the inadequacies of and the need for changes in the institution of academic literary studies. From the sixties through the eighties there was consensus among leftist literary critics on a few major issues: the scope of critical inquiry had to be dramatically expanded, the concept of "literature" had to be significantly broadened, rejection of the limitations of literary criticism, and the narrowness of the canon of masterpieces.

In the sixties Florence Howe and Lillian Robinson argued for incorporating women's texts into the curriculum. Leslie Fiedler and Richard Poirier advanced the claims of popular culture. Louis Kampf and Paul Lauter urged attention to working-class literature. All these critics insisted on the inescapable relevance of politics to literary criticism.

In the seventies the dialectical criticism advanced by Fredric Jameson, the new historicism of Stephen Greenblatt, and ethnic criticism of Edward Said urged the linkage of politics, history and literary criticism and the redefinition of "literature" to encompass heretofore "nonliterary" materials. By the early eighties, the leftist project of redefining literature and literary criticism took on the broadly accepted nickname of "cultural studies".

According to Gerald Graff and Reginald Gibbons there were serious reasons for the renewal of literary criticism methods, all indicating a need to "revitalize the humanistic study of literature", the "moribund humanities establishment", the evermore "hyperspecialized and disinterested academy"[2] (qtd. in Leitch 401). The projected

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[2] "Preface" to *Criticism in the University*, 1985.

renewal to be effected by cultural studies depended on an enlarged sense of literature to encompass different literary and non-literary texts (Leitch 401).

Terry Eagleton[3] considered that "literature" was not an immutable ontological category or objective entity, but rather a variable functional form and socio-historical formation: "it is more useful to see 'literature,'" he wrote, "as a name which people give from time to time for different reasons to certain kinds of writing within a whole field of what Michel Foucault has called 'discursive practices'…" (qtd. in Leitch 403).

The proper object for cultural studies was not literature but discursive practices understood historically as rhetorical constructs informed by the contemporary power-knowledge relations. Among discursive forms worthy of study, Eagleton named films, television shows, popular literary works, children's books, scientific texts, and classic "masterpieces."

Michael Ryan[4] selected three key moments in the progressive transformation of contemporary literary studies into cultural studies: "…the combined effect of feminist, ethnic, and leftist criticism forced recognition that literary texts were fundamentally documents and social events, having socio-historical referents; …the proof brought by projects of structuralism and semiotics that texts were shaped by social codes, conventions, and representations;…the rise in importance of the mass media and popular culture over the centrality of the literary classics" that " compelled the critics to admit the crucial formative role played by these new discourses" (Leitch 404).[5]

In his report on Cultural Studies, Vincent Leitch, clarifies the philosophy of this brand of literary criticism in the eighties: there is no reality outside cultural discourse. On the contrary, reality is constituted by different such texts. There is no "pure pre-discursive, pre-cultural reality. Cultural discourse establishes the grounds for social existence and personal identity" (Leitch 405).

Other developments of American literary theory, discussed by Leitch[6] in a book dedicated to cultural criticism and post-structuralism in the United States, include "pluralizing poetics", such as "black aesthetics" (Homi K. Bhabha, Henry Louis Gates, Jr.), "women's literatures" (Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Kate Millet, Elaine Showalter), minoritarian poetics[7] (Florence Howe, Jan Mohamed), and "apparatuses of knowledge/power", where foucauldian theory is applied (Edward Said), and even academic institutional models criticism and reform also inspired by Michel Foucault (Robert Scholes).

Somehow in a parallel movement with the evolution of Cultural Studies in Great Britain and the United States, American Studies was born and evolved. In time it

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[3] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983, pp. 139-167.
[4] Michael Ryan is co-editor (with Amitava Kumar) of Politics *and Culture: An International Review of Books*. He was the founder of the Cultural Studies Association (U.S.) and served for many years as the Chair of the Association Organizing Committee. His books include *Marxism and Deco struction*, *Politics and Culture*, *Camera Politica*, *An Introduction to Film Analysis*, *Literary Theory: A Practical Introduction,* and *Literary Theory: An Anthology.*
[5] "Cultural Studies – A Critique", no bibliographic data provided.
[6] *Cultural Criticism, Literary Theory, Poststructuralism*. Vincent Leitch, New York : Columbia University Press: 1992.
[7] Originating in the idea that "minority literatures exhibit distinctive images, rhythms, characters, themes, structures, genres, and styles" (Leitch 92).

contributed to a historically and culturally lucid perception of American literature. Gene Wise identifies the first coming "to consciousness", non-academic stage of this discipline during the Progressive era as a revolt against formalism (Wise 170-171). Paradoxically the rage for explanation and form resulted into a well built static paradigm in Vernon Louis Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought* (1927). What follows under the later denomination of "myth and symbol school" (e.g. Perry Miller, Henry Nash Smith) functions under the same urge to "impose form upon experience" (Wise 175). This obsession to give coherence to the American historical experience resulted in such beautiful constructs like Smith's *Virgin Land* (1950) and Miller's *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956). This is a passionate consensus work sustaining a uniform, harmonious vision of national history rendered in individual lonely intellectual voices best illustrated by F.O.Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* (1941) or R.W.B. Lewis's *The American Adam* (1955). Such gifted approaches to a literary corpus detected patriotically as local constituted in the American curricula the literary canon, which comprised Emerson, Thoreau, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Walt Whitman.

According to Professor T.V. Reed, beginning in the early seventies, there was a rise in the influence of anthropology and sociology in American Studies. Central here was a move away from a concept of "culture" as the high arts (drawn from the literary origins of American Studies) to a more anthropological notion of "culture", as consisting of patterns in a whole way of life. While the more positivist social sciences had had some impact on this discipline (primarily through their use by social historians), a more general influence had come from the hermeneutic human sciences, those stressing the unavoidably interpretive nature of all social analysis. Included among these were phenomenology and its American cousins, enthnomethodology and symbolic interactionism, and various other social constructionist and reflexive ethnographic approaches, all of which aimed at a less reductive description of social practices than was typical of some empiricist works. These approaches tended also to stress the inter-subjective and self-reflective rather than the wholly objective, structurally determined nature of social action.

Structuralism and semiotics also played a very important role in the aforementioned developments. Most versions of these approaches built on the notion that culture was structured like a language with certain rules of combination analogous to grammar and syntax. Semiotics had been applied to the study of virtually every kind of cultural object from fashion, to architecture, to food, to television, as well as to various linguistic, visual and aural art forms. It had been applied in and across a number of fields including anthropology (Claude Levi-Strauss), folklore (Vladimir Propp), literature (Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva), psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan), film (Christian Metz, Teresa de Lauretis), and general cultural studies (Umberto Eco).

In the context of American Studies, structuralism emerges in the mid- to late-1970s, partly as a desire to put the myth and symbol school on a more "scientific" ground, and partly through a more general influx of European theory. While structuralism as a term was largely overshadowed by its "post-ing", semiotics remains one of the most pervasive and lively approaches to cultural studies. One key, related development has resulted in a focus on "material culture", on artifacts (furniture, buildings, etc.) that can be "read" as social history, via methods that frequently include

the semiotic but draw also from archeology and other traditional anthropological and history-based tools, as well as from the fields of folklore studies and art history, among others. More recently, the influence of anthropology has returned in new form via the hermeneutic ethnography of Clifford Geertz, the textual ethnography of James Clifford, and socio-anthropology of Pierre Bourdieu – three varied approaches, all of which call into question the privileged position of the anthropological observer (typically a "Westerner" observing "non-Western" "primitive" cultures) by turning the ethnographic lens on the culture and the interpretive practices of the observers themselves[8].

In the U.S. and in American Studies, neo-marxism first becomes a significant force in the late 1960s and early 70s, primarily through the work of the Frankfurt school (Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, Max Horkheimer, and, more tangentially, Walter Benjamin, and later, Jurgen Habermas). This school of émigré intellectuals, forced to leave Nazi Germany in the 1930s, had had an impact on American mass media studies even before the 1960s but was brought into prominence by a generation of New Left intellectuals influenced especially by Marcuse's social theory. A bit later, other important works of "Western marxism", especially those of Antonio Gramsci, with his concept of cultural "hegemony", and Georg Lukacs, with his concept of "reification", are rediscovered in the U.S. Other important schools of neo-marxism acknowledged below include the structural marxism of Louis Althusser, the cultural materialism of Raymond Williams, the eclectic semiotic marxism of Mikhail Bakhtin, Fredric Jameson's literary theoretical approaches, marxist- or materialist-feminisms, Third World marxisms (Mao, Castro/Guevara, etc.), and the surrealist-anarcho-marxism of the Situationists[9].

The broader terrain of postmodern theory often includes four theorists influenced by but not within poststructuralism: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Jean Baudrillard. Examples of poststructuralist/postmodernist American Studies would include Gatyatri Spivak (in a postcolonial mode), Judith Butler (in a queer theory mode) and Donna Haraway (in a feminist historical materialist mode). These writers, among many others, are critical of aspects of postmodern theory but find some elements extremely useful.

The breakdown of notions of American exceptionalism and class consensus, analyzed above, was largely triggered by the social movements of the 1960s. Those movements also set in motion a profound rethinking and rewriting of ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality and other modalities of "difference" that further challenged monolithic conceptions of Americanness. This process was fueled by the rise of ethnic and women's studies within and without American Studies. And the new scholarly attention paid to previously marginalized subjects of history deeply reshaped theories and methods of study.

This category in particular points up the inadequacies of categorization, especially in interdisciplinary work. Separating race from gender from sexuality from

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[8] Reed cites for this period, among others: Terence Hawkes. *Structuralism and Semiotics*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977; Marshall Blonsky, ed. *On Signs*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 1985: Anthony Giddens, and Jonathan Turner, eds. *Social Theory Today*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987.

[9] Reed illustrates: Fredric Jameson. *Marxism and Form*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971; Terry Eagleton. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976.

other modalities of difference threatens to re-marginalize them just as they are claiming their centrality to any cultural analysis. In addition, while separating racial studies from gender studies from sexuality studies serves to highlight their respective evolutions and achievements, it does so at the cost of obscuring multiple identities and complex interactions.

Reed also considers that "racial and ethnic theories have had a profound impact on all levels and kinds of humanities and social science scholarship. Thus these works should be read as at once substantive contributions to their fields, and as critiques of the inadequate theorization of race and other constructions of cultural difference in traditional American Studies work (as well as in humanities and social science scholarship generally)" (Reed). Among the major contributors in the field are: Michael Omi, Eduardo Bonilla-Sivla, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (African-American culture/literature), Gloria Anzaldúa (Chicano/Latina focused theories) a.o.

Before approaching the Romanian literary canon, historiography and multiculturalism, a brief overview of its evolution is necessary in order to comprehend the present situation. After the 1878 internationally recognized independence of Romania, Romanian political legitimacy had to be proved (Cornea 14) culturally. A propagandistic national educational production, authored by linguists, printers, historians (Timotei Cipariu, Vasile Pop, Gh. Gh. Arbore, Al. G. Drăghicescu, V.A. Urechia etc.) spread over the newly declared territory. Frustration led to exaggerations, to optimistic and uncritical presentations.

With Titu Maiorescu and Dobrogeanu Gherea literary criticism obtains professional status. Aesthetic (Maiorescu) as well as social, Marxian criteria (Gherea) are applied to literary assessments. However, the major tendency to be preserved until today in literary appreciation and the establishment of the canon remains aestheticist. The critic's intuition seems to prevail even in a literary history conceived by a reputed historian like Nicolae Iorga[10]. When historical, social, psychological observations mix with artistic ones they never really intermingle in the literary text.

Garabet Ibraileanu, under the influence of "biologism" and temper, provides background information as possible determiner of the artistic work, but the focus of his analyses proper is aesthetical. He may consider mentality, collective psychology of a certain historical moment, and biology in relation to the artist's temperament, but not texts from different contemporary domains (sociology, psychology, history) as sources of culturally specific discourse formations[11]. H. Sanielevici contributed to Romanian

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[10] *Istoria literaturii române în secolul al XVIII-lea* (1688-1821) (Engl. *The History of Romanian Literature in the 18th Century*), Bucureşti, 1901.

[11] This concept is the subject of chapter 2 of Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*. He begins with a criticism of the concept that everything with the same label is not the same thing and that the difference between differently labeled things may be a habit of thought. The problem is that within our own language community we fail to notice the way in which we constitute what we talk about by such arbitrary language practices that have become second nature to us. Studying these discourse formations (or discursive formations) is "archaeology". We will try to grasp the implicit rules we use that work together to form this map of the world around us. Without knowing it, we group distinguishable objects into unities and thus constitute our objects. An object is constituted like this by a "unity of discourse". The unity of discourse on a particular topic (or object) "would be the interplay of rules that define the transformation of these objects, their non-identity through time, the break produced in them, the internal discontinuity that suspends their permanence (Archaeology of Knowledge, p.33). For example, we constitute the object of "marriage" by a set of rules that allows us to say that we are "married" together with the interplay of rules that defines the

literary criticism with a *sui generis* version of historical materialism, buttressed by a limiting social theory opposing classicism to romanticism based on class economical status. The practical result was arbitrary. Eugen Lovinescu, an extremely influential literary critic and historian, in spite of the academic garb of objectivity, preached "impressionism" as the major critical tool in the perusal of literature. Mihail Dragomirescu excels in his consistent non-historical approaches to the literary canon as a series of masterpieces.

The nearer time of the 1940s and 1950s is dominated by George Calinescu's view of literary history and criticism as creative. Tudor Vianu will support a holistic aesthetical-historical-sociological erudite attitude towards artistic writing. Nicolae Manolescu continues this methodology, adding flourishes of invention and constructive abilities in his *Arca lui Noe*/*Noah's Ark* (1980 – 1983), a fantasy theory of the novel.

Even if younger contemporary critics (Ioana Pârvulescu[12], I.B. Lefter[13], Carmen Muşat[14] etc.) seem to be connected to poststructuralist literary theory when they write about it, and they protest in magazine articles, like *Observator Cultural* (Engl. *Cultural Observer*), against canon traditionalism, in their own applied critical work the same separation of art, a special superior domain, from other types of discourses may be detected. Minority cultural status can not be approached within a strictly literary framework even if it includes literary history, literary criticism together with sociological and historical observations. Consequently, multiculturalism does not penetrate their canonical discussions. One perceives as revolutionary and innovatory the daring feat of including recent or contemporary writers in their university courses and books.

Romanian literary theory, as presented by Paul Cornea[15] (influenced by the Annales School, but applying, in text elucidations, traditional aesthetical-sociological, intrinsic literary close reading), Mircea Martin (a theoretical, but not practical, devotee of the Geneva School), Gheorge Craciun (whose university printed course *Introducere în teoria literaturii*[16], published in 2003, stops at Roland Barthes's structuralism stage) never really tackles or applies to Romanian literature postmodern/post-structuralist methodology.

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marriage as dissolved (annulled, divorced, non-valid). Foucault suggests that archaeology should examine the way this works, how we control our mental taxonomy through language practices (Lois Shawver, *A Dictionary of Postmodern Terms*. http://www.california.com/~rathbone/lexicon.htm).

[12] *Prejudecăţi literare. Opţiuni comode în receptarea literaturii române*. (Engl. *Literary Prejudice: Comfortable Options in the Perception of Romanian Literature*), Ph. D. Thesis. Advisor: Professor Nicolae Manolescu, No date stated; *În intimitatea secolului 19* (Engl. Within the 19th Century), Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2005.

[13] *Anii '60 – '90. Critica literară* (Engl. *The 60s to the 90s. Literary Criticism*). Bucureşti: Paralela 45, 2002; *Primii postmoderni: „Şcoala de la Târgovişte"*. Bucureşti: Paralela 45, 2002.

[14] Carmen Muşat. *Romanul românesc interbelic. Dezbateri teoretice, polemici, opinii critice* (Engl. *The Romanian Novel between the Two World Wars. Theoretical Debates, Polemics, Critical Opinions*), Bucureşti: Humanitas Educaţional, 2004.

[15] *Originile romantismului românesc* (*The Origins of Romanian Romanticism*), Bucureşti: Editura Minerva, 1972.

[16] (Engl. *An Introduction to the Theory of Literature*), Bucureşti: Cartier, 2003.

Histories of Romanian literature[17] (more sociological but still informed by Maiorescu's taste criterion) preserve the traditional masterpiece and major writer canon. Ethnic or other minority status commentary is/are incidental and casual. Jewish-Romanian writers, like Marcel Blecher or Mihail Sebastian, are discussed in terms of artistic achievement and biographical information. Texts are never approached in terms of ethnic components or determiners.

Conversely, American secondary schools textbooks and curricula contain African-American, Chicana, and other American minority literary texts[18], based on the idea that such early cultural experience will help minorities to respect and value their ethnic status as well as relate in egalitarian terms to the mainstream[19]. Past and recent Romanian corresponding material does not discuss ethnicity or gender as definers of literary texts. The mainstream, masterpiece/master writer literary canon is unchanged, except for the addition of some contemporary texts, since George Calinescu's far-right 1930s-40s, nationalistic, teleologically organicist *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* (*History of Romanian Literature from its origins to nowadays*, 1941). The Roma are no longer described as natural "caricatures of human society" (Calinescu 82) or foreign residents as "trash" (Calinescu 388), yet literary history is constructed in terms of "significant moments"/"grand/meta narratives"[20], and the canon is selected on exclusively traditional aesthetic grounds. No minority writing is discussed and/or contextualized[21]. The authors or coordinators of the textbooks are professors who apply the same mainstream, essentialist standards in their university courses and books. Moreover, some of these academics, like Nicolae Manolescu and Eugen Simion, head educational boards that conceive national Romanian literature curricula[22].

Attempts were made, before and after 1989, to bridge the cultural gap between the Romanian literary mainstream and minority writing. Translations in volumes dedicated to such ethnic groups constituted the major means of communication. They were and are necessary for the obvious reason that language does constitute a separating factor, a symptom of isolation of the ethnic periphery from the national center in

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[17] E.g.: Ov.S. Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura română între cele două războaie mondiale* (Engl. *Romanian Literature between the Two World Wars*), 3 vols. Bucureşti: Minerva, 1972; Dumitru Micu, *Scurtă istorie a literaturii române* (Engl. *A Brief History of Romanian Literature*), 4 vols. Bucureşti: Iriana, 1997.

[18] E.g.: Lexington High Sschool Program of Studies English.htm; Mexican-American Literature for the Junior High School_ Short Story, Novel, Biography.htm

[19] Kira Isak Pirofski, San Jose State University *Multicultural Literature and the Children's Literary Canon*. http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/papers/literature.html.

[20] Metanarratives are understood as totalising stories about history and the goals of the human race that ground and legitimise knowledges and cultural practises. The two metanarratives that Jean-François Lyotard (*La condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir.* 1979) sees as having been most important in the past are: (1) history as progressing towards social enlightenment and emancipation, and (2) knowledge as progressing towards totalisation. Modernity is defined as the age of metanarrative legitimation, and postmodernity as the age in which metanarratives have become bankrupt. George Călinescu's *History of Romanian Literature from its origins to nowadays*, offers such a national coherent and totalizing literary construct, where minority writers and so called "minor" ones are either ignored or perceived as steps towards the manifestation of a master writer or masterpiece.

[21] E.g.: Nicolae Manolescu (coordinator), Gh. Ardeleanu, Matei Cerkez, Dumitriţa Stoica, Ioana Triulescu. *Limba şi literatura română. Manual pentru clasa a X-a.* Bucureşti: Sigma, 2000; Al. Corşan, Liviu Papadima, Ioana Pârvulescu, Florentina Sâmihăian, Rodica Zafiu.*Limba şi literatura română. Manual pentru clasa a XI-a.* Bucureşti: 2003.

[22] E.g.: The National Board of Romanian Language and Literature.

Romania. In the United States the urge to succeed as artists in the mainstream market constitutes a major trigger in the usage of American English in ethnic literatures (Tony Morrison, as a Nobel Prize winner and African-American writer constitutes an emblematic example). Hungarian/German-Romanian writers do not appear usually as hyphenated, symbolically rejected or unwilling to join linguistically the mainstream. Even in point of literary administration they are segregated in publishing houses of their own[23].

Jewish-Romanian writers assimilated forcefully, especially after the 1950s, write in Romanian about their rural[24] or city[25] minority culture environment. The Romanian-Roma literary crop was exclusively written in Romany and only given a chance to be published after 1989. This is the case of the novelist Gheorghe Păun Ialomiţeanu (*"Arzoaica" a stat cu dracul la masă,* 1991) and the poet Luminiţa Mihai Cioabă (*Rădăcina pământului*, 1994). They express Roma ethos and political satire (Djuric 63).

The linguistic separation of minority writers in Romania suggests the unattractiveness or publishing policy of the mainstream book market. Hungarian/German-Romanian writers tend to look up to ethnic models they select in the majority national culture they usually emulate. This is the case of the Petöfi and Ady Endre models with the Hungarian-Romanian writers, and of Western German cultural influence with the German-Romanian ones, during Ceausescu's Nationalist Communist regime (Köllo 10; Vighi 3; Mihaiu 2).

Due to the consistent parallel evolution of the Romanian mainstream and minority literature and to the lack of periphery ethnic education, no ethnic awareness exists in these groups' artistic output. Hungarian/German-Romanian writers' production was politically engaged when protesting, or just in tune with Hungarian/German mainstream creative work, but, even when using an ethnic familiar environment, never artistically ethnicity-oriented. Nationalist Communist Romania was coerced to believe in Ceausescu's meta-narrative. No margin ethnicity had access to this political artifact.

Consequently, both pre- and post- 1989 minorities literary/literary history production does not feel the inner natural need to express an ethnicity that was successfully eluded from Romanian central and margin consciousness. Books like Nicolae Balotă's *Scriitori maghiari din România* and Köllo Károly's *Confluenţe literare* enumerate and discuss moments of cultural cooperation between the Romanian mainstream and the Hungarian-Romanian literary minority. However, they do not

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[23] E.g.: Unhyphenated and administratively segregated: Nicolae Balotă, *Scriitori maghiari din România.* (Engl. *Hungarian Writers from Romania*) Bucureşti: Kriterion, 1981; Peter Motzan, ed. *Vânt potrivit până la tare. Zece poeţi germani din România*. (Engl. *From Breeze to Gale. Ten German Poets from Romania*). Bucureşti: Kriterion, 1982; Administratively segregated: Károly Köllo, *Confluenţe literare. Studii de literatură română-maghiară.* (*Literary Confluences. Essays on Romanian-Hungarian Literature*), Bucureşti: Kriterion, 1993; Unhyphenated: Gavril Scridon. *Istoria literaturii maghiare din România 1919-1989* (Engl. *The History of Hungarian Literature in Romania*). Cluj-Napoca: Editura „Sfinx", 1996; *Poeţi germani născuţi în România* (Engl. *Romanian Born German Poets*). Bucureşti: Editura Persona, 1998.
[24] Ion Călugăru, *Copilăria unui netrebnic/ Ion Călugăru, A Rascal's Childhood*, 1936.
[25] I. Peltz, *Calea Văcăreşti/Văcăreşti Road*, 1934; *Foc în hanul cu tei/Fire in the Lime-tree Inn*, 1935.

master cultural criticism tools of literary analysis. Texts and epistemes[26] are not deconstructed into ethnic components, and such related elements are not decoded in different discourse formations.

The main coordinates of the Romanian literature primary/secondary school and academic canon (textbooks, curricula, syllabi, reference work) are chronology and aesthetic value (the decorum of essentialism). The efforts for post-revolutionary renewal, made particularly in the primary/secondary school department, resulted in superficial solutions (at the level of denominations and presentations in textbooks) or few elective courses. The general/core courses of Romanian literature, that represent the manipulative educational institutional authority in the Romanian academic system, continue the 19th century-originating, teleological historical tradition built around a grand/meta narrative (Maiorescu, Calinescu, Manolescu) of Romanian literature. The promoters/maintainers of this perception see themselves as liberal intellectuals, paradoxically grouped as aristocrats of culture, conservers of the great, universal values and hierarchies in a world of rapid changes and equalitarian non-hierachical intervention (the result of the 1960s movements in Europe and America). Even determinist Marxian or "history of mentalities" literary researchers/critics (Gherea, Ibraileanu, Cornea) are not really able to apply their theory to texts.

This approach to Romanian literature transforms a lively cultural occurrence into a museum exhibit, an escapist construct. Phenomena like *Transilvanism*[27] or *Aktionsgruppe Banat*[28] constitute the live seed of human truth in Romanian multicultural veracity. The study of minority writing through specific literary and cultural procedures is an act of acknowledgement of reality and necessary moral pragmatism. One grasps, in this way, literary history as locally and episteme oriented, instead of an artificially constituted version of high culture.

Polysemy (During 6) should penetrate Romanian literary history to replace general/abstract perceptions and approaches with nuanced, atomized categories: i.e. not the mainstream mass, but its social/ethnic constitutive groups; not national/international/universal appreciations/evaluations, but local and delimited in time/space, based on those time/space specificities. Theories/interpretations of phenomena are acts of dominance/violence and manipulation. Atomization (specific time/space reference) and objective examination of facts institute genuine Cultural Studies research and presentation methods. Thus literary histories, that constitute today guiding master interpretations of literary texts in secondary and high education, should be studied as cultural documents offering the possibility of understanding past constructs that resulted from ideologies and historical facts: Calinescu's theoretical discourse, as compared to other contemporary ones, would deliver revelatory units/formations that made up the 1930s-1940s nationalistic/intuitionist Romanian

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[26] According to Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (original title: *Les Mots et les choses*, French for Words and Things, 1966): a set of fundamental assumptions that grounds knowledge and its discourses and thus represents the condition of their possibility within a particular epoch.

[27] The Hungarian-Romanian writers' belief in a local Transylvanian spiritual entity, either as ethnically and nationally unifying [Kuncz Aladár], or provincially regionalistic (Kos Károly, Szentimerei Jenö).

[28] The politically contesting German language youth writers group living and writing in Timisoara between 1972 and 1975. Most of them immigrated to Western Germany due to *Securitare* persecution. Among them were: Albert Bohn; Rolf Bossert; Werner Kremm; Johann Lippet; Gerhard Ortinau; Anton Sterbling; William Totok; Richard Wagner; Ernest Wichner.

episteme. So would Manolescu's texts reveal the 1970s and 1980s aestheticism and academic novel theory (Albert Thibaudet, Gustave Lanson, Ortega y Gasset, Wayne C. Booth, Northrop Frye) escapism as an indigenous intelligentsia response to local Nationalist Communism.

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Le multiculturalisme et le canon littéraire:
Perceptions américaines et roumaines

Ce travail discute la valeur éducative du multiculturalisme appliqué dans les études littéraires universitaires. Le canon académique et l'idéologie culturelle qui determinent la structure des programmes universitaires dans ce domaine sont considérés comme des facteurs d'analyse déterminants. L'argumentation est concrètement illustrative et commence avec l'histoire des études culturelles britaniques, du post-structuralisme français et du multiculturalisme américain. Au suivant, on analyse la situation de l'éducation et de la critique

littéraire roumaine académique ancrée dans l'esthétisme traditionaliste et nationalisme, à partir des causes historiques de cette orientation qui ignore les approches occidentales et nord-américaines contemporaines. À la fin, on fait référence concrètement au rapport entre les minorités ethniques et la majorité nationale roumaine dans la stratégie culturelle autochtone.

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